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SUBJECT: FRAUD SUMMARY (REVISED) Q ABIDJAN, COTE DQIVOIRE

REF: 08 STATE 74840, 09 State 57623

¶1. Following is Abidjan's fraud summary for April 2009 through August, 2009.

¶2. COUNTRY CONDITIONS: Cote dQIvoire has been a divided country since a 2002 failed coup attempt evolved into an armed rebellion that split the country in two. Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and New Forces leader Guillaume Soro signed the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) in March 2007, and a new government was formed with Soro as Prime Minister (PM). Implementation of the accord is ongoing, with elections scheduled for late 2009, but The Ivorian government has not regained full control of the northern part of the country which remains under the de-facto control of the New Forces.

Presidential elections are currently scheduled for November 2009, but preparations are behind schedule. Although the unstable and unpredictable security environment that led to previous evacuations no longer prevails, Americans traveling to Cote dQIvoire should follow political developments carefully, as there is potential for violence in the run-up to, and aftermath of, elections.

¶3. NIV FRAUD: The most common types of NIV fraud referred to the FPU are related to fraudulent documentation. During this reporting period, Abidjan's FPU investigated 22 cases associated with NIV applications. In one case, a student presented a fraudulent scholarship letter from the government of Cote dQIvoire signed by a representative of the mayor in the embassy's district. Additionally, there were a handful of A or G visas referred, many with relatives posing as governesses or butlers to obtain G5 status in which there was no employer/employee relationship. Further, a case involving an invitation to Ministry of Education officials from an unauthorized member of the Ivoirian Mission to the United Nations in NY revealed a breach so serious that it reached the level of the Prime Minister and the offender was recalled from overseas diplomatic service.

Fraud refused at the window: Based on a survey of one month's refusals, post estimates there are up to three times more fraudulent documents per month than referred. These include merchants and traders applying to purchase merchandise, often in New York, where some are known to have been selling smuggled African goods on the N.Y. market scene or on the streets while in the United States. With the "suspect documents" feature in new software version, intake assistants tracked about 117 cases with suspicious documents indicating common, though low-complexity, fraud. In one case, an advisor in the Ministry of Finance submitted a bank statement in support of his B1/B2 application, showing a balance of over \$10,000 while verification of the statement revealed that the actual balance was only about \$150. It is not known why the applicant submitted the fake bank statement.

¶4. IV FRAUD: Marriage fraud and fraudulent child/parent relationships are the most common trends in IV cases, and usually

take the form of fraudulent marriage or divorce documents. Abidjan FPU investigated several cases associated with IV applications, including a random verification of DNA collection procedures. These revealed five fraudulent claims of relationship, approximately a 7% ratio fraudulent to bona fide, compounded by the fact that DNA tests showed that the QauthenticQ birth certificates in some cases were fraudulent. Post also had negative DNA in four alleged parent/child relationships.

15. DV FRAUD: Adjudicators routinely refer marriage and educational credentials to FPU for verification due to the high incidence of fraud associated with DV applications. The Fraud Prevention Unit is tracking the emergence of a new trend among fraudulent documents: fraudulent results printed on genuine paper. This type of fraud has expanded to bank statements and other official documents. To gauge the extent of this emerging trend, post referred a significant portion of claimed-to-be authentic educational and marriage documents to FPU this quarter. Of the cases referred, 4 were found to be fraudulent. While a relatively small number, it will provide post with a baseline to judge any further growth in this emerging trend. During September, in the final stretch leading to the DV 2009 program end, the FPU needed to focus all efforts and resources on the expedited verification of documents submitted in support of Diversity Visa (DV) applications. FPU succeeded in expediting all investigations to aid legitimate applicants, but many of the lower priority cases, where fraud was very likely involved, could not be completed in time. The unit consulted with Embassy Accra about the increasing trend of Ghanaian DV winners with new spouses scheduling interviews in Abidjan rather than in Accra. Embassy Accra reported they have uncovered a marriage fraud ring which is currently under investigation by Ghanaian authorities. The increased applications from Ghanaian applicants, a 50% increase in interview appointments versus last DV year, suggests a trend of applicants from Ghana trying to evade inspection in Ghana.

16. ACS AND U.S. PASSPORT FRAUD: Although Abidjan has not yet detected cases of confirmed fraud in passport and CRBA cases, every case must be scrutinized for a real relationship between parent and child, and hard evidence of physical presence that meets transmission requirements. Few passport renewal cases are routine. The incidence of QaccidentalQ births in the U.S. to Ivoirian mothers experiencing Qunexpected complicationsQ while in the U.S. for tourism is the norm, with expectant mothers giving birth on Medicaid, while friends and relatives lead them to believe there is a free birthing fund, which includes Qfree citizenshipQ for their children. U.S. citizen minors are brought home to be raised as Ivoirians, but entitled to emergency services and other benefits. Frequently, parents come in to renew passports issued to infants up to 15 years prior with piles of photos to prove relationship. Parents never document the children as Ivoirians for fear of losing U.S. citizenship. Grown children then attempt to meet requisite transmission requirements for their own offspring, often with minimal documentation. Some eventually move to the United States as adults and petition whole villages of relatives. The Consular Section is currently conducting a census of all registered citizens to better determine its population make up, expected to be in large majority at this time dependent children being raised in Cote d'Ivoire of non-citizen parents. It is also exploring with GOI officials the countryQs laws on dual nationality which are vague and contradictory. While ACS adjudicators have resolved most passport and CRBA cases through extensive interviews, photos and other means to prove relationship, it has not ruled out the possibility of DNA in particularly troublesome cases where strong fraud indicators exist.

17. ADOPTION FRAUD: No adoption cases to report this quarter.

18. USE OF DNA TESTING: Officers routinely suggest DNA testing to prove the relationships in family-based immigration cases. The visa categories most susceptible to fraud are IR2 and Visas 92/93. It is not uncommon for a parent of a child born out of wedlock to petition for him or her after never having lived with the child. In these cases of unconventional relationships, it is difficult to solicit adequate information and convincing evidence of a qualifying relationship without resorting to DNA. Post is currently designing a new collection procedure for DNA pursuant to the instructions in 09 STATE 097431. It is anticipated that the new collection and handling procedures will take significant time to implement and

oversee in the event that a collection facility has to be built or otherwise modified, and due to the diminished number of cleared Americans.

¶19. ASYLUM AND OTHER DHS BENEFIT FRAUD: Marriage fraud and fraudulent child/parent relationships are the most common trend in Visas 92/93 cases. DNA is often recommended, particularly in cases of Liberians, whose documentation is generally unavailable or unverifiable.

¶10. ALIEN SMUGGLING, TRAFFICKING, ORGANIZED CRIME, TERRORIST TRAVEL: Post is unaware of any organized alien smuggling at this time although we regularly have DV applicants claiming derivative status for a stranger or a relative and who are refused under 212(a)(6)(E).

¶11. DS CRIMINAL FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS: There have been no formal DS criminal fraud investigations in Abidjan in this six month reporting period. RSO has assisted, however, on numerous occasions, with turning over the investigation of malfeasance at the Ivoirian Post and Telecommunications, and in visa cases where there were fraud indicators.

¶12. HOST COUNTRY PASSPORT, IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AND CIVIL REGISTRY: If a document for investigation originates in the southern, government-controlled part of the country, it is possible to verify its authenticity by visiting the issuing city hall and comparing it with the relevant page in the register. In the northern half of the country still under the control of farmer rebels, it has proven nearly impossible to authenticate civil documents due to the destruction of so many civil registers. At present, (within the last 6 years) any civil documents from the New Forces controlled northern region must be considered suspect, as verification of any such documents is impossible.

¶13. COOPERATION WITH HOST GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES: For the most part, local authorities have given their cooperation with no obstructive attempts at extracting compensation for their trouble, although the Consular Section has noted a few cases of airport official suggesting that Ogiftsq would be welcome when assisting American citizens detained upon entry without Ivoirian visas due to a hastily and poorly implemented visa policy early in this period. Fortunately, however, the Consular Section has persisted in the last year in developing close and fruitful relationships with a variety of working-level and high-level ministry and law enforcement officials. This has been of great benefit in the sectionQs increased ability to cooperatively cross-vet cases with relatively effective results of officials where malfeasance is suspected.

¶14. AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: Advance Fee Scams: The number of advance fee scams is rising in the Abidjan consular district. On average, the Consular Section receives 2-3 inquiries per week in relation to a scam of this type. In most cases, FPU can readily determine the fraudulent nature of such scams and properly advise the inquirer. On a time-permitting basis, the FPU has investigated some of the more sophisticated schemes. Some appear to be connected to, or simply revisions of, a recurring scam. The FPU and the RSO offices collaborate closely to share information on fee-scam activity.

Abidjan is closely monitoring two recent visa scams. First, several cases coming through postal workers at the main Abidjan post office are under investigation. Postal and cyber caf employees at the central post office have been representing themselves as U.S. Embassy representatives in exchange for additional fees. One postal worker committed theft and fraud when he took cash for a SEVIS fee from a prospective studentQs father, then borrowed a credit card from a colleagueQs acquaintance to generate a receipt, then refunded the fee to the credit card. This generated an alert message from DHS to the University and to the studentQs parent, who cooperated with the Consular Section, and witnesses in separate postal scam cases in taking the malfeasance to the police. Although the investigation by the Judicial Police is still ongoing, the section has reached out to the new Post Office Director for assistance and is currently launching an anti-fraud public awareness campaign in the media.

The second visa scam is regional and involves a company calling itself Quality Agency Burkina. The agency is apparently furnishing its clients with employment documents, EIN numbers and other information to be provided at a visa interview and is using cover of well-known American companies such as Colgate Palmolive and Herbalife. They are also using spoof emails in which the QU.S. Consular Section AbidjanQ recommends this company to prospective H1B applicants. They are using the former ConsulQs name and a state.gov email address for him to respond to inquiries. They are also using public consular email addresses for which we respond to public inquiries (consularabidja@state.gov and also abidjanconsular@state.gov) to email clients.

¶15. STAFFING AND TRAINING: The FPU has been inadequately staffed due to an EFM position, vacant since May 2008, and since the reprogramming of one vice consul in February 2009 to another critical needs post. The sole Consul and Vice Consul have been so busy with routine production and management activities that they have been unable to give this area as much time and attention as it merits. Also, we began new DNA collection procedures on Friday, October 30 per State instructions which we estimate will take a minimum of 8 Q 10 hours of officer time per month for these additional fraud prevention activities. Based on the new LE visa and passport production rotation, which involves four local line assistants and a supervisor, we have not been able permanently to assign a second LE assistant to anti-fraud activities to assist the one fraud investigator. Reinstatement of the officer position and an additional local staff member would greatly enhance our ability to commit the time necessary to this important work and to keep up with increased fraud activity in Abidjan.

¶16. Abidjan looks forward to working closely with FPP on taking its anti-fraud efforts, previously heavily reliant on documentary fraud, in a more preventative direction using technology and tools such as Text Alerts and preventative analysis.

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